1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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593 628 house, and, though the cases nowadays find their way into the courts, a very common defense is that the feud is very long-standing and that "the two grandfathers" began it. The tales written in the last century by William Carleton, who wrote of a life he himself knew intimately, describe faction fights in which whole parishes became involved, but the center of disturbance was invariably a family dispute in which the brothers of a family ranged with their friends against those of another. So fierce is the solidarity which the identification of brothers and their land calls forth that even today in Clare the name "defending Tim Flanagan's title" is jocularly given to forcible resistance to eviction, after a famous stalwart of the last century whose ten sons fought valiantly for their father's farm.

593 589 In fact, this emotional attachment is strong enough sometimes to preclude the breaking up of the family. Two instances of this sort came under the authors' special notice out of the many which occur. It is difficult to get the exact figures, since census materials deal only with the marital status of farm owners, but many of the bachelor-owned farms of Clare may be of this type. In the first case, two brothers and four sisters occupied a small holding of twenty-three acres and a four-room house for over fifty years. Several of them at various times had tried to break away; in fact, two brothers did, but the ones who stayed gave as their reason first that they hadn't wanted to leave the old people and afterwards that none of them had wanted "to be the first to leave." The second case was very similar. Two brothers and a sister had stayed on to work a small farm for their old parents, but, when the old couple died, none of them wanted to leave and each felt too old for marriage.

593 428 Whatever differences make a rift in this fraternal front are matters more of preparation for leaving the farm family than of internal differentiation in status and behavior. On most small farms only one son can be kept at home as suc-

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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593 tionship of their parents. Thus there is a good deal of the boy's regard for his mother in his attitude toward his sister. Likewise for the sister, especially in the years when both are fully adult, the brother comes to have much of the position of the father, especially if he is older. He shares the masculine ultimate control of farm and household. If she remains on the farm after her brother's marriage, she must look to him for her dowry.

The country people have a good deal to say about the strength of this bond. Deep-rooted in the years of common subordination and common association, it survives the re- [574] moval of the sister to another house and farm. It means much visiting and a close relationship with the coming children. The country people marvel that a young child [604] may often like its mother's brother better than its "own uncles." They mean thereby that the bond survives in equal strength with that where the common patrilineal interests of a common family name are in question, as in the case of two brothers and their children.

589 That the complete family is the complete unit of life both 592 social and economic to the small farmer is admirably illustrated by the incomplete families of the countryside. By the term "incomplete" the authors indicate those many small farms which are worked by spinsters, bachelors, widowers, and widows.

589 In such farms, control is exercised by the person owning 592 the farm. A widow is usually helped out by a male rela- 562 tive, brother, nephew, or son. Here again the male devotes himself to the tasks which in ordinary circumstances would fall to the father in a full family unit. The control over expenditure and the disposal of farm goods rests, however, with the woman. But even then the bargaining in such typically masculine enterprises as the cattle fair would be delegated by her to her helping relative. In one instance which came to the authors' notice a young widow called

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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her unmarried brother to live with her and directed his efforts in draining a large field. The two of them ran the farm very successfully, though the brother grumbled. In another, a "landless" young man pleaded successfully to a Land Commission official for an addition to his aunt's holding, presented his case, and carried out the negotiations, but the final reference had to be made, of course, to the aunt for whom he worked, for in such case the feeling that the man must represent the family and farm unit in the community at large is sufficiently strong to push a subordinate "boy" into the position usually filled by the farm husband and father.

Similarly with several old bachelors. A nephew moves in and works the farm, but the old fellow keeps strict control even to regulating the nephew's expenditures for amusements. In one case, where a widower had a small son, the son was taken in by a childless sister and raised by her, and when he grew up and married he inherited the sister's farm. His father remarried and raised a second brood. In another, two spinsters spent their lives on a farm worked by their two cousins.

The attitudes of the country people to these arrangements show that incomplete farm families are felt to be departures from the normal; they are subjects for commiseration. Such phrases as "It's a hard life she has with only the brother and no husband to help her" and "He's all by himself with only his son there on the land, poor fellow," are commonly applied to them.

The policy of the Land Commission in increasing farm holdings is very significant in this regard. The officials recognize the social value of the full family explicitly. According to the official in charge of land division in Clare, who has had successful experience in other regions as well:

> An old-age pensioner without family could not be considered for an addition of land, nor could a couple of spinsters. . . .

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476 The commonest form of coöperation is that which in-
246 volves lending a boy to a "friend" whenever he is needed. In order to illustrate this form of coöperation and to give the setting in which it takes place, it will be well to describe the hay harvest in a country district. We choose the district
[471] of Luogh. Luogh is a mountain region of small holdings, none of them larger than twenty-five acres, divided among twenty-four households. There was only one large farmer in the immediate vicinity; he worked his lands through a herdsman and, as he had his own hired hands, did not figure in the haymaking. All the rest of the holders had what is called "general purpose land" by the Land Commissioners; they had some bog, some meadow, several fields being grazed over, and a garden of potatoes, rye, cabbage, and oats, always less than an acre in extent. The number of cattle each had ranged from six cows, two calves, and two bullocks held by one holder with sixteen acres of mountain land and an addition about three miles off in fertile bottomland (he had got this, eight acres, several years before from the Land
[737] Commission) to none. The person having no cattle was an old bachelor, an old-age pensioner, who lived by himself on a farm of four acres stocked only with a few hens.

476 The hay was early, the weather favorable, and the harvest
246 began in mid-July. All the holders except two were Luogh
621 people related by complicated ties of blood and ancestral
589 association to the land and to each other. There were three lone bachelors, a widow helped by her brother, and three widowers helped respectively by one son, three sons and a daughter, and two sons. The other holders were married couples with each a son or two and perhaps a daughter present, if they were old, and many growing children if they
[167] were not. The region was one of large-scale emigration, so that a smaller number of young people were present than is
476 perhaps usual.
246 As the hay ripened and the weather turned fine, the fami-

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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lies began to save the hay, mowing it, letting it dry, and stacking it as soon as possible, first into small grass cocks, then into the usual six to eight foot haycocks. After several weeks it would be moved into a single great hayrick in the haggard. There was a great deal of interest and much comment back and forth over the progress of the various families, the probable weather, and the yield of the various meadows. The men seemed to feel a general rivalry to do their work well and quickly. About half the families had horse-drawn mowing machines. Those who had them mowed their own meadows as quickly as possible, working from earliest morning as long as light held. They worked with the aid of their sons and with that of boys from the families who had no machines of their own. At each subsequent stage of the harvesting, a boy or young man not a member of the family whose meadow was being worked could be seen giving his labor in aid; he took his place at meals during the day.

The mowing done, the farmer then took his machine to the farmer whose son had helped him and mowed the meadows belonging to his friend. In one instance a youngish farmer mowed the meadows of three others; in another, of two. Certain meadows were full-handed enough not to require extra hands, and in five cases no help was given, though the mowing and stacking took a very long time with them in comparison to the others, and they were obviously short-handed. Two of these were bachelors who lived alone, and two more were the "strangers." Two other families had insufficient meadow of their own and were forced to buy hay on the so-called "conacre" system (buying the hay as it stands and reaping it oneself within a stipulated time).

Here then was an example of an important agricultural operation undertaken by the local community in which provision was made (except in five or six cases) for effective coöperation over and above the usual family economy. This is not an isolated instance; in Luogh it has been the practice

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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coincident upon that change cannot be assigned as the sole cause of emigration.

As the decline in population has been more characteristic of the small farmers, it may be possible to associate it with social conditions pertaining among that class. They have participated in the very agricultural changes which are thought to have caused their dispersal. They enjoyed the high prosperity of the closing decades of the last century, and won the progressive reforms of agrarian tenure. Yet they continued to send forth thousands of emigrants. Fluctuating economic conditions have undoubtedly had their effect, but factors whose greatest demonstrable result is merely to stay or hurry the stream of emigration cannot be evoked as efficient causes. In taking the problem directly to the small farmer, it will become possible to sketch the social setting in which emigration takes its form.

Clearly connected with the decline in population are other demographic statistics, particularly those of marriage. They present features which are unique among civilized peoples. Inasmuch as they are again indications of an underlying uniform social pattern whose occurrences they record, it is necessary to analyze them in terms of the behavior patterns of rural Ireland. Like emigration, they are more characteristic of the country people. Springing from marriage, they are thus directly indicative of social forces within the small farmers' family economy.

Briefly stated, they present the following characteristics: In Saorstat Eireann in 1926, according to the census then conducted, there was a larger proportion of unmarried persons of all ages than in any other country for which records are kept. Marriage, furthermore, did not take place until a comparatively late age. Thus 80 per cent of males between twenty-five and thirty years of age were unmarried in 1926, 62 per cent of males thirty to thirty-five, 50 per cent of males thirty-five to forty, and 26 per cent of males fifty-five to

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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sixty-five. The significance of these figures springs from their comparison with other countries. In the United States only 39 per cent of males twenty-five to thirty are unmarried, 24 per cent between thirty and thirty-five, and only 10 per cent between fifty-five and sixty-five. Denmark, an agricultural country similar in many ways to Ireland, had only 49 per cent, 25 per cent, 15 per cent, and 8 per cent of these age groups not yet benedict, respectively. In England the percentages were 45 per cent, 25 per cent, 16 per cent, and 10 per cent, a great contrast to the sister island. Indeed, in the Free State the percentages of unmarried among the males of each age group are usually double those of other countries.

Unmarried females are also very numerous, though not so excessively so as is the case with the males. In the age groups twenty-five to thirty, thirty to thirty-five, thirty-five to forty, and fifty-five to sixty-five the percentages are respectively 62 per cent, 42 per cent, 32 per cent, and 24 per cent. In Denmark the same groups showed only 39 per cent, 25 per cent, 19 per cent, and 14 per cent; in England, 41 per cent, 26 per cent, 20 per cent, and 15 per cent. Figure 11 gives a graphic comparison between the Irish Free State and three other modern countries.

Later marriage and high incidence of bachelorhood is, like population decline, more pronounced among the country people. And among them, it is highest in those areas where small holdings prevail. In County Clare 88 per cent of the males between twenty-five and thirty in rural districts were unmarried. This percentage is not abnormally high for Ireland, as Sligo, Galway, Mayo, and Leitrim, areas of small holdings, have 90 per cent and Roscommon 91 per cent. In Clare 90 per cent of women between twenty and twenty-five were unmarried, yet six western counties have higher percentages than Clare's.

In fact the thickly populated and poorer western counties

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70 per cent and 50 per cent. There is a general tendency: the larger the town, the earlier marriage takes place. Ennis, the largest town and county seat of Clare (6,000), has a somewhat lower percentage than is usual for towns of its size in Ireland. In fact, Clare's figures, 60 per cent and 30 per cent in those age grades, are better even than those for such a metropolis as Cork City, with 68 per cent and 40 per cent.

Correlations of occupation and marital status[5] support the assumption that the longest delay in marriage is found among the small farmers. Both agricultural laborers and town laborers marry younger and in greater numbers proportionately. No other occupational class, not even the professional class, delays marriage so long or has so many celibate members.

These facts obviously relate themselves to the population decline. They are, as it were, two different symptoms of the same condition. But strangely enough in a declining population, fecundity is very high. Although there are fewer married women of childbearing age per 1,000 inhabitants than in other countries (74 in Ireland, 142 in the United States, 125 in Germany, 112 in Denmark, 121 in England, and 119 in Italy), the fertility of these women is remarkably high. For every 100 married women under 45, there are 131 children under five years of age, compared with only 77 in the United States, 71 in England, 93 in Denmark, and 75 in Germany. The number of children is higher again in western counties of Ireland than in eastern. The women of Clare under 45 produced 140 children for every 100 married women, those of Donegal 152, but in County Dublin and County Wicklow, the two eastern counties, only 122 and 124. In spite of this great fecundity there is, however, in Ireland only a normal proportion of children under 15, if Ireland is compared to other countries. The

[5] *Census of Population, 1926*, vol. V, part II: Ages and Conjugal Conditions.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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592 888 His shifting the topic from help to alignments within the family is entirely unconscious; it could not better illustrate the connection between work roles and reciprocal interaction in the family.

> If there was a squabble between the mother and daughter, the old woman would more than likely stand up for the daughter. She would teach her how to do things and would have more patience than the father.

592 888 589 Quite as before in the case of the farm economy, the strength of the pattern reveals itself in the aberrant cases. Where there is no old couple to take up new status and position in the family group, others within the family of the older generation or even of the same may be forced into such a position.

Two cases came under the particular notice of the authors. In one an elder sister became to all intents and purposes the "old woman" in the house. A widow, she owned the farm, was in the "west room," and had the place at the hob. Her younger sister and her husband, who had married into the farm, managed the farm and knew that their children would inherit it. The elder sister helped a bit with the household, but spent much of her time before the fire. Both the man and woman of the house referred to her as "the old woman," a term of respect, and one of the authors, who lived in the house for a time, learned only after much intimacy the half-forgotten fact that she was not mother but sister to the younger woman. In the other case it was a father's sister who took up the role, the product of long substitution for a lost mother, and at the match the writings made provision for her.

888 561 Intimately connected with the transition at marriage are all the phenomena of age grading so marked in Irish country life. The old couple advance one step in their course through life; they enter a new age grade.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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888 573 521 in the group. Comments and questions are phrased through him. He takes the preferred verbal bit and passes it on among the others. And when agreement is finally reached, it is his quiet "So it is" that settles the point for good.

573 O'Halloran sits on the hob across the hearth from him. He is the "drawer-down" in the scheme of jocular titles which includes most of the group. O'Halloran is a man of fifty but mature. He owns a farm a little better perhaps [592] than most, just beyond the village. He works it with his wife and six children, the eldest of whom is nearing twenty. As he has no parents left alive, he is the "old man" and the man of the house. But individually he is more. "He has a [484 great head on him," they say. He has had a somewhat wider experience, once having traveled as a salesman over the 446] roads of southern Ireland. Yet, in spite of the fact that he is occasionally a little skeptical and his politics are somewhat suspect to the villagers, who are today De Valera men to a man, he is emphatically one of them.

573 521 His title of "drawer-down" is an apt one. O'Halloran seeks information. He most frequently of them all brings up points of interest and questions of the day. These he addresses to O'Donoghue, who passes them on for general discussion. Like all the rest of them his illustrations are apt and his anecdotes definite and precise, but his chief role is to "draw the talk down" to common levels of interest which allow all to take part.

573 521 589 O'Loughlin usually occupies the other hob. He has no real place here. He is a bachelor, aged fifty or so, and, though he comes here, he has little to say. He is seemingly silent all the time, and he breaks his silence only to add to unanimity. For O'Loughlin is very poor and lives alone. Having no family, he can neither coor nor work his land to best advantage. And occasionally he works on the road, breaking stones with the boys of the village. Just as he has no voice here, he has no title either.

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It has already been pointed out that the census figures available at the time of the fieldwork on which this book is based are those of the Irish census of 1926. Since that time some at least of the figures based on the succeeding decennial census, that of 1936, have become available. There are also a number of annual statistics which bear on the questions of Irish population. It is interesting to turn to these for the light they throw on subsequent development in the trends we have noted.

The release of the 1936 census figures in 1939 showed conclusively that the demographic trends that have marked Ireland since Famine times continue to persist. Neither the years of the establishment of the Free State up to 1932 nor the years of depression, economic war, and the experimental programs of the De Valera regime since then have affected the trends. Any of the charts prepared for the 1926 figures needs only to be extrapolated along the trend line a few points to show the situation of ten years later.

Stated briefly, these trends recapitulate and reëmphasize the points we have already made. Emigration continues to mark the life of the country, draining the countryside first into the towns and second overseas, now to Great Britain rather than across the oceans. Ireland continues to hold its record of possessing the highest percentage of unmarried men and women in the world. The population over sixty-five years of age continues to rise. The population of children continues to fall. Marriages continue to be fertile, by comparison with many other countries. But they still tend to become fewer and fewer, and the delay of marriage into middle life grows longer and longer. The ratio of females to males continues to fall, until in 1936 there were 975 males for every 935 females in Ireland, the lowest sex ratio in Europe and one of the lowest in the world.

These figures mark the continued existence of the familistic order we have discussed. They mark as well the continuance of its struggle to fit modern life. Perhaps a figure

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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gories. He is a family man. He may be the shrewdest of traders and the best of farmers, but what gives him his occupational status, determines his pattern of work, provides his incentive, is a set of dispositions arising in the balanced interests and reciprocal obligations of the social group to which he belongs.

We can test this conclusion. There are a large number of small farms in the countryside worked by what we can call incomplete families. They are worked by spinsters, bachelors, widowers, widows. In such farms the person owning the farm exercises control. A widow, for instance, is helped out by a male relative—brother, nephew or son. The male takes over the tasks which would ordinarily fall to a farm father. Even if the widow retains control of expenditures and disposal of farm goods, the bargaining, buying and selling in such typically masculine enterprises as the cattle fair rests with the man. For instance, in one example which came to my knowledge, a 'landless' young man pleaded successfully to the Land Commission for an addition to his aunt's holding. It was he who carried out the negotiations successfully. The feeling of the community was sufficiently strong to push the young man into a position beyond his status. Some male must represent the aunt and her holding in the outer world. With old bachelors, a nephew moves in and works the farm, but the old fellow keeps strict control, even to regulating sums spent by the

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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593 589 nephew for amusement. Where a widower had a small son, the son was taken by a childless sister. She brought him up to inherit her husband's farm, and her brother might marry again. Two spinsters spent their lives on a farm worked by their cousins.

To the country-people, such arrangements, successful enough economically sometimes, are makeshifts, subjects for commiseration. One hears often enough such phrases as these: "It's a hard life she has with only the brother and no husband to help her." "He's all by himself with only his son there on the land, poor fellow." Even government [656] officials nowadays recognize the social value of the full family. A household of father, mother and sons gets preference in land division. The work to be done is the strengthening of the social group; personal enrichment and use of the soil are merely incidental.

476 593 Up to this point, I have described the countryman as though he worked in isolation from his fellows. In a measure this is true, for his first duties are to his immediate family. Still, there is a great deal of work which goes on between farms. There is a certain amount of co-operation of an informal kind. Work in the countryside is permeated with a give-and-take of reciprocal aids.

476 Co-operation of this sort takes many forms. Men lend tools, or work with tools of their own for 'friends' and neighbours, particularly at mowing,

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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is only the 'crabbit' person who will sell the land, and 'go to town and drink the money'. Such conduct is indefensible, and for good reason. It runs counter to every law of kinship and local custom.

But in the case of a young widow, a conflict can arise. The countryside recognizes only dimly, if at all, the right of a woman to hold land in her own person. That does not mean she cannot exercise full control and work the land herself, which she often does. Rather, she is regarded as holding it in trust for a brother or a son of her husband or her father. She cannot alienate it from the patrilineal line to which it belongs. The conflict arises because she herself moves between two such lines; her father's and her husband's.

Consequently, a widow remains upon the farm only if her children are growing up. If they are very young she returns to her father's farm, and a husband's brother takes over. If she is childless, she is hardly regarded as having moved out of her own kindred; she is buried, when she dies, not with her husband but with her father.

Even if she marries, she and her new husband merely hold the land in trust. The second husband and his children are 'strangers to the land'. The rightful heir by blood, whose 'name' is on the land, may turn them out. So strong is the identification. The woman gets the place only as a mother of the family's sons. One must remember that I am not speaking of formal title or legal right. They

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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over the countryside. At least, O'Sullivan, the older man, was free to come and go wherever he might wish. But both were 'landless' men; they could never attain full peasant status. In the identifications of Irish familism they were condemned to celibacy; neither could feel comfortable in the old men's *cuaird*. There was no place there for them, except as Oscair's behaviour showed, as 'playboys' and entertainers. So they, too, must occupy an interstice in the structural alignments of rural social life.

For once again the examination of rural life leads one perforce to concepts of structural balance. The organization of the community takes its form in the social behaviour of cliques among the countrypeople. That behaviour cannot be disassociated from the characteristic alignment of sentiment and interests which at once separates and reintegrates the generations. And the alignment itself in its turn relates the countrymen to one another in the community, upon the basis of relative age, with the familistic nexus in which are balanced prestige, command, the land and the continuities of descent. That to which the countryman is attached is a social order, as Sir Horace Plunkett alone among the commentators on the Irish scene could see. And a social order is an active living growth whose embrace soon gathers in the whole of life.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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is carried to the post office, for fear that the postmaster will open letters and talk publicly of their contents (or take money from them). It is customary for boys and young men to hide themselves in the darkness or behind fences in order to overhear conversations of passersby, or witness their misbehavior, which can be reported; this compels folk who move about after dark to conceal their faces and talk in whispers or low tones. When a person hidden in the darkness is accosted suddenly, he will vault a fence, run away, or crouch down and hide his face or draw a
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raincoat over his head and shoulders to avoid being recognized. Most social events and visiting take place after sundown, so that movements from one house to another will be unobserved.

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Deviant behavior once learned of assures its perpetrators of becoming the focus of gossip and ridicule. But ridicule seldom is voiced in the presence of the victim; rather, he or she is told of it by relatives and acquaintances who have
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witnessed or, more commonly, been told of it by others. My ballad not only took advantage of the ubiquity of rumor, but its composition, aided and abetted by two dozen respondents, enabled me to discover the existence of a seldom revealed tradition of satirical balladry, common to the Irish, which has singled out for opprobrium many folk in the past. During three summer visits to Inis Beag following 1960, my wife and I were able to witness the singing of my song publicly. We learned that it, as others of its genre, is sung only before small gatherings, and whether or not it (or certain of its verses) is sung and by whom depends on
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the makeup of the assembled group. Since ridicule is almost never expressed in the presence of its victim or his kin or close friends, we were able to gain information about kinship relations and factionalism by noting the juxtaposition of balladiers and audiences and which verses were sung.

Courtship and Marriage

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Marriages are fewer and are entered into later in Ireland than in any other Western country. In 1951, approximately one-third of the men and one-quarter of the women in Ireland between the ages of 55 and 64 years had never married, while two-thirds of the men and two-fifths of the women between 25 and 34 years of age were single. Celibacy and age of marriage figures for Inis Beag approximate those for the rest of peasant Ireland. In a population of 350 persons, 116 are married; 13 are widows; 3 are widowers; and 33 males over 23 years of age and 21 females over 17 are single. Since marriage occurs between the ages of 24 and 45 years for men and 18 and 32 for women, based on statistics extending back to 1911, only 18 men and 9 women (excluding 3 women who, because of physical disabilities, probably never will marry) are eligible for marriage. Not only are 34.4 percent of the males bachelors and 22.6 percent of the females spinsters, but the average marriage age for men in the period 1951 to 1960 was 35.5 years and for women 24.8 (compared to an average for rural Ireland of 34.7
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years for men and 28.7 for women in 1946). The age span between spouses married during the past half-century ranges from the husband being 21 years older than his wife to 4 years younger, but the average age span has been between 8 and 12 years for each of the five decades. The number of marriages per decade has been

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

declining steadily, and between 1951 and 1960 there were only nine marriages between folk who remained in the island—and since then but five. 582

The prevalence of celibacy and late marriage is a matter of grave concern to the people. My analysis of these phenomena reveals over 20 contributing factors, of which I will consider only the most important—and these briefly, since most of them will be addressed further within the contexts of the family, personality, and emigration. The one most often voiced by the islanders is the emigration of girls in increasing numbers at younger ages; of the nine girls eligible for marriage, only one is older than 25 years, and several are contemplating emigration. The folk are much less prone to talk of the single estate and late marriage than they are of emigration, which share many of the same causes, and they appear to know fewer of the causes of the former and are less willing to assign relative weights when assessing them. The cause of all three conditions most often cited by both writers and social scientists is the system of inheritance, whereby land cannot be subdivided but is passed on to one son who must wait to marry until his father dies or is willing (or forced) to pass on the land, and his siblings have married or emigrated. By this time, the son is usually middle-aged and cautious in making his choice of a spouse. Most fathers in Inis Beag are loath to surrender their property, and with it control of the family, to sons wishing to marry, and some even will postpone receiving the old age in order to maintain their status position past the age of 70 years. A father who does not choose a successor among several sons until late in his life—which is a common occurrence—can retard their marriages if they choose to "wait it out." Equally loath to disturb the family *status quo* is the mother, who fears not only the loss of her commanding position in the household, but the loss of her son's affection to an incoming daughter-in-law. The man who wishes to marry and is prevented from doing so by domineering and jealous parents is the subject of gossip, and his plight is regarded as a "shame."

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Since late marriage has been a persistent phenomenon in Ireland since the great famine, it has become institutionalized and serves as an expectation for young people. That the folk are aware of this cause is attested by their frequent advice to offspring that they postpone marriage to conform to island tradition. This advice invariably is buttressed by a rationale of males not having enough "sense" to marry until they approach the age of 40 years. Reflected in the rationale is the system of male age grading conceptualized in Inis Beag: a man is a "boy" or "lad" until 40 years of age, an adult until 60 years, middle-aged until 80, and old-aged after that (exhilarating to the American anthropologist who comes from a society obsessed with the "cult of youth"). Another rationale for late marriage often heard in Inis Beag is the impossibility of divorce in Catholic Ireland, which demands that the choice of a spouse be well considered. It appears that this argument is usually used to explain late marriage when other factors are in fact responsible—certainly when "considering" covers two or more decades.

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Two closely linked causes of celibacy and late marriage seldom broached in Inis Beag are male solidarity and the unwillingness of many men to accept the responsibilities of marriage, particularly its sexual responsibilities. Marriage is looked on with trepidation, or at least as something less than desirable. The marriageable man in his late twenties and thirties is usually sexually repressed to an unbelieve-

582 589 581 662 [593] [164]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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able degree, has been dominated by parents who have allowed him to take on few major responsibilities, has a mother who acts as a wife surrogate in all but the sexual sphere (at least consciously), has established a routinized existence, and has male companions for whom he feels affection and with whom he shares numerous work and recreational activities. Some men who have been promised or willed land, and who have consenting parents and brides-to-be, will balk at a match because they are "too happy with the lads," and, if persuaded to marry, they will attempt to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage—"The men run with the boys before marriage and carry on the same afterward." Several bachelors and spinsters almost have married several times in succession, only to find the sexual commitment on each occasion too difficult to make at the last moment.

Before the coming of a permanent priest to Inis Beag, it is asserted that young people contemplating marriage were able to "keep company" frequently and openly before the union was arranged, and that some pairings were "love matches." But since then—with the separation of the sexes from late infancy on, the ubiquity of gossip and opprobrium, and the actions of priests—courting almost has disappeared, and it is not uncommon for a couple awaiting their wedding to have little personal knowledge of one another. Contact on the island between the sexes today is limited to meetings at the few parties which take place, at the occasional summer dances, or *céilí*, held on a large flagging near the school, and sometimes "at the well" or "walking to the cow" during daylight hours. Two generations ago, private Sunday afternoon strolls afforded young men and women the opportunity of coming to know one another well, but these "rambles" about the island are done now only by couples of the same sex—one of the several manifestations of institutionalized friendship. Choice once again seems to be intruding into matchmaking, however, with the increasing demands of acculturated youths for marriage with "love."

Matches are the end product either of secret bargaining between the families involved which can extend for weeks, or of the impetuous act of a man who—goaded by companions or by stout, or both—will visit the home of his "chosen" after dark to negotiate, accompanied by a kinsman or close friend. The bargain, once made, is sealed by the male participants with the emptying of a bottle of whiskey brought by the prospective groom, after which a boy or young man of the household is sent out—often after midnight—to summon relatives and acquaintances for a night long party, known as the *cleambnas* (the word for matchmaking in Gaelic). Sometimes this party is followed by as many as three more on consecutive nights, the expense for which is borne by the family of the bride-to-be. When the bargaining is protracted, it usually is done during the 12 days of Christmas or the final fortnight of Lent, and the match is announced soon after Epiphany or Easter. Hearsay concerning possible matches abounds at these times, but each year "most rumors are dry," unless, of course, "with a lot of drinking and urging a man might decide to take the plunge." It was customary in the past for the wedding to take place four days after the *cleambnas*, but now the service must wait from one to three weeks until the genealogies of the families of the bride and groom are examined by the parish priest to determine their degree of consanguinity.

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Implicit in these statistics are such Irish phenomena as monogamy, the predominance of the nuclear family (Only 10.3 percent are extended in Inis Beag.), family exogamy, patrilocal residence, and a high incidence of celibacy. The last listed bachelor who lives with his widowed sister-in-law, and frequently is visited by a brother's adolescent grandson from the mainland, is regarded by many bachelors as fortunate—"He has a woman and a boy to work and no 'responsibilities.'"

Inheritance in the island is patrilineal, and before a man can marry, his father or widowed mother must "pass on" the property to him. To encourage aged men to surrender ownership of their land, a statute forbids their receiving the old age at 70 years until they have so acted. But despite this law, six Inis Beag elders aged 70 to 79 years—with a total of seven bachelor sons ranging in age from 32 to 47 years (not counting eight others who have emigrated but are eligible to inherit) —still maintain ownership themselves. When a man is without sons, he most commonly wills the land to a brother's son or arranges to have a man wed his daughter and "marry in" to the household. An in-marrying son-in-law, it is interesting to note, may pay a bride wealth, which usually is much larger than the dowry of the girl, for he has no land of his own. Among contemporary landholders, five have obtained property from uncles, six from widowed mothers, and two by marrying in. Other land in Inis Beag has been procured through purchase, exchange, gift–giving, and land dispute verdicts.

A major cause of celibacy, late marriage, disputes, and emigration related to the system of inheritance, seldom mentioned either in writings about Inis Beag or by the islanders, is the common practice of a father playing off his sons against one another for the patrimony in order to achieve favored treatment for his wife and himself in their waning years. Elders are well treated, in part as a result of the above and in part out of the fear that after death their ghosts will punish those who have maltreated them. Often the playing off of sons for the patrimony leads to factionalism within the family and may provoke a secretly favored son to emigrate or, more seriously, all sons acting in concert to depart in anger and disgust. Today, a total of 22 married men, widowers, and widows whose average age is 65.7, hold land that is inheritable by a total of 56 sons whose average age is 30.1 years. (The 16 elders who have a total of 20 sons in the island average 66.7 years of age and their offspring 33.6.) The uncertainty about which sibling will inherit is reflected in these figures: of the 59 present landholders, 47 percent are first born, 42 percent second, 8 percent third, and 3 percent fourth and beyond.

Although the Inis Beag family is totally exogamous, the village is only 78.3 percent exogamous (The range for the four villages is from 75 to 83 percent.). Since 1911, six women have married men, mostly farmers, living in communities along the neighboring coast and only one an Inis Thiar islander, while four mainland and five Inis Thiar women have wed men from Inis Beag. During this same 50 year period, six local men have married into contiguous mainland settlements and one into Inis Thiar, but no men from the outside have married into the island. As we have noted already, immigrants for two or three generations are regarded as strangers by the folk, and the same is true of in-marrying wives; these women are treated aloofly and are the victims of much spiteful gossip. Many female siblings marry locally rather than emigrate—one case of four sisters, five of

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(Humphreys 1965:245). A far more forceful statement is that of Marvin K. Opler and Jerome L. Singer, wherein they address the etiology and consequences of the Oedipus configuration in the Irish family:

> The central figure in Irish families is more likely to be a controlling figure on the distaff side, while fathers, especially in straitened economic circumstances, are frequently by contrast shadowy and evanescent.... An Irish male ... beset with anxiety and fear of female figures early in life, and lacking possibilities of firm male identification with a father, would later experience the sexual repressions and socio-religious definitions of marriage and sexuality for which his culture, with its high celibacy rates, protracted engagements, and sin-guilt emphasis, is justly famous.... all this spells a final anxious and fearful lack of positive sexual identification, varying in a continuum from repressed and latent homosexual balances through to added displacements and distortions that are either pallid asexuality or fearful and bizarre misidentifications.... Irish resistance to role identification ... was seen as ... having the imprint of anxiety in relations with persons of the opposite sex, ordinarily mothers and older sisters.... [The] ... basic personality has stamped into it such feelings as male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females, and the kind of latent homosexual feelings which produce a further sense of sin and guilt ... (Opler and Singer 1956:15–18).

Complementing the Oedipus complex is male solidarity, which has a long history in Ireland—revealed in legend, historical sources, and modern literature. Psychologists of Freudian bent see male solidarity as one of the many behavioral manifestations of the Oedipus configuration—based on "male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females," and "latent homosexual feelings;" but many anthropologists (especially functionalists) analyze it as a sociocultural phenomenon, for it is found in societies where the Oedipus complex appears not to exist. Elizabeth Coxhead, in discussing Lady Gregory's play, *Grania* (completed in 1912), alludes to the "tragic plight" of many Irish women, past and present:

> *Grania* is ... a play in which a woman is ousted from an emotional relationship between two men. The "love" is that of man for man, of brother for brother; it is loyalty to the warrior band, and a corresponding resentment of the woman who takes away the warrior's freedom, makes trouble with his comrades, distracts him from his purpose in life. It is an attitude which filters through the play as light filters through crystal; which runs through the heroic Irish sagas ... Its continuing validity was borne out by all Lady Gregory had observed in the world around her, the world of the "loveless Irishman," the peasant society which relegated women to serfdom, the middle-class intellectual society which left them only donkey-work.... it is not Finn alone who robs Grania of Diarmuid. "His desire was all the time with you yourself, and Almhuin." Almhuin, the charmed circle of hunters and warriors; its modern equivalent was the masculine society of clubs and bars, of wit and talk and stimulus, from which a woman ... would be forever excluded ... such a view of the Irishwoman's role, of her relegation to insignificance and her resentment under it, is not exclusively feminine. It is abundantly confirmed by Synge. His heroines ... are creatures caged and raging, given no scope for their powers, condemned to love men who are poor things beside them and do not really care for them at all.... A woman has only to put her nose into a saloon bar ... to realize that Almhuin is with us still (Coxhead 1961:145–146).

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168 829 [522] government increase its services and subsidies even more, reveal the underlying tension within those who are most strongly committed to the local tradition and wish its perpetuation.

167 168 829 12 The index of my field notes contains more references to emigration than to any other category, for seldom in an interview, whether guided or open-ended, did the topic fail to come up, no matter what was the initial subject under consideration. Of the more than 30 causes of the phenomenon yielded by my analysis, all are known to the folk, and they are ever eager to express opinions as to the relative weights which should be attached to those that they deem significant. My wife and I usually were solicited for our opinions as well whenever the topic was addressed. I will deal below with only the major causes of emigration from Inis Beag, and will consider first those which are internal—the "push" factors—and then those which are external—the "pull" factors. The islanders emphasize external causes in their own deliberations, but those who are not apologists for the *status quo*, or who are genuinely bewildered by the exodus of young people in recent years, are able to identify the internal ones also, but are less willing to assign them sufficient weight. Emigration is the topic about which my wife and I could be most objective and outspoken concerning the role of the church and obtain the most agreement and arouse the least resentment among our respondents.

167 428 • 589 592 [121] Paramount among the push factors are the previously considered system of inheritance and the causes underlying the prevalence of celibacy, late marriage, and personality depression. The fact that only one son in a family can inherit land, which forces his brothers to emigrate, is the internal factor most stressed in the literature pertaining to Inis Beag, but least stressed by the folk. The reason for this is that until recently it was rather common for siblings without land to remain on the island, thanks to the benevolence of their brothers and the government and their ability to support themselves by craft work, keeping tourists, fishing, managing [162] shops, and obtaining remittances. Of the 71 households in Inis Beag, 28 are headed by male siblings: 20 in which 10 pairs of brothers and their families live, 3 in which 3 pairs of bachelor siblings reside, 3 in which 3 brothers and their families live, and 2 in which 3 siblings reside—two as bachelors in one and [182] the third with his family in the other. It is apparent that other factors, of equal or greater importance, are stimulating emigration.

167 168 581 [829] [162] The push factor given the most weight by the islanders is the unwillingness of men to marry—"The lads are too fussy, and the girls get tired of waiting and go off." But the fact that male "fussiness" is based on such conditions as parents opposing the marriage of their sons for various reasons and bachelors being loath to assume the responsibilities of marriage, especially its sexual responsibilities, seldom is probed. Sometimes it is the girls who are accused of "putting off" potential spouses by being too discriminating, but this accusation becomes untenable when one observes that there is but a single unmarried woman between the ages of 26 and 44 years in Inis Beag (as compared to 18 men), and that the average age at which women emigrate has dropped from 24.5 years during the 1941–1950 decade to 21.1 during the last decade (as compared to 24.9 to 23.8 for men). Some girls admit that they are emigrating because the possibility of their being asked to marry is remote, but far more of them are dissatisfied with the lot of married

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[For information pertaining to emigration and its relation to sexual repression, late marriage, celibacy, and family relations in Ireland, see 17: Messenger, ER6 Rural Irish, category 116, pp. 32-36.]

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HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

I have already touched tangentially on some of the historical and broad cultural implications of sexual puritanism, in Ireland as well as Inis Beag. In this final section, I will examine the perennially addressed phenomena of late marriage, celibacy, and emigration, in their island setting, with special reference to the factor of sexual repression.

In a population of 350, 116 persons are married, 13 are widows, 3 are widowers, and 33 males over twenty-three years of age and 21 females over seventeen are single. Since marriage occurs between twenty-four and forty-five for men and eighteen and thirty-two for women, on the basis of past statistics, only 18 men and 9 women are eligible for marriage. As mentioned earlier, the average marriage age for males is thirty-six and for females twenty-five. My wife and I isolated almost two dozen interrelated causes of late marriage and the prevalence of bachelor and spinsterhood. The most emphasized cause in Ireland is the pattern of inheritance: one son, usually the eldest, must wait until the father is ready to pass on his patrimony and his own siblings have married or emigrated. In an attempt to alleviate the situation somewhat, a law today requires that to receive the "old-age" (pension) a man at seventy must will his property to a son, or other appropriate person. This cause is important in Inis Beag, although primogeniture is not so well defined (of those sons inheriting property, 47 percent are first born, 42 percent second, 8 percent third, and 3 percent fourth and later). Inis Beag fathers are loath to surrender their land and control of the household to their sons and will often play off the sons, one against another, in order to achieve favored treatment for their wives and themselves in their waning years. Occasionally this procedure "backfires": the sons, acting in concert, emigrate together, and an increasing amount of land lies idle because of this.

Equally loath to disturb the family status quo, island mothers will often resist incoming daughters-in-law, who threaten not only their commanding position but the loss of their sons' affection. Mothers whom we have interviewed in Inis Beag and elsewhere in Ireland display the extreme of Oedipal attachment when they rejoice in their sons' decision

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589 593 [155] 793 to join the priesthood; not only are spiritual blessings and prestige brought to the family as a result, but their sons are at last removed from potential wives. Yet the Inis Beag man who wants to marry and is prevented from doing so by domineering and jealous parents is the subject of much gossip. Outwardly, at least, his plight is considered a "shame."

831 581 589 567 [593] To the man in his late twenties and thirties who is secure in his home and has established regularized patterns of conduct (and has a mother who acts in most ways as a wife surrogate), the general responsibilities of marriage, and specifically its sexual responsibility, are factors militating against his seeking a spouse. Some men who have land, the consent of their parents, and willing "sweethearts" will balk at a match because they are too happy "running with the lads," and if persuaded to marry, they will try to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage. It was hinted to my wife and me on several occasions that particular island celibates almost married several times in succession, only to find the sexual commitment too difficult to make at the last moment.

162 167 582 589 [871] [484] [178] Three other causes of late marriage and the single estate in Inis Beag must be mentioned. Girls are more dissatisfied with their future lot than are boys and men and are emigrating at ever younger ages, thus sharply reducing the number of eligible females. During the 1950–1959 period, the average age at which girls emigrate dropped below twenty-one years. Each year more of them attend schools on the mainland and thus are more exposed to stimuli which promote emigration. Mothers are puzzled at the increasing exodus of their daughters, since women today have a far easier time than they did a generation or two ago; but some are glad to see them escape the drudgery and boredom of island existence. Since

182 582 late marriage has been a persistent phenomenon in Ireland since the great famine, it has become institutionalized and serves as an expectation for young people. We heard Inis Beag adults assert that marriage should be postponed to conform to island mores; this usually was buttressed by

829 [561] a rationale of males not having "enough sense" to marry until they are nearly forty years of age. Reflected in this rationale is the male age-grading conceptualized by the folk: a man is a "boy" or "lad" until forty, an adult until sixty, middle-aged until eighty, and aged after that (exhilarating to the American anthropologist approaching forty who comes from a society obsessed with the "cult of youth"). A final cause, often

582 [586] articulated by the islanders, is the fact that divorce is impossible in Ireland, therefore the choice of a spouse must be well considered. It

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appears, however, that this argument is usually used as a rationalization for late marriage, when other causal factors are, in reality, responsible—certainly when "considering" covers two or more decades!

The population of Inis Beag has dropped from a high of 532 persons in 1861 (up 76 from the prefamine census a decade earlier) to 497 in 1881, 483 in 1901, 409 in 1926, 376 in 1956, and 350 when my wife and I were there two years later. Today, there is grave concern over the future of the island, and some folk hold that within another generation or two Inis Beag will have gone the way of the Blasket Islands. Although my wife and I isolated almost two dozen causes for the phenomena of late marriage and celibacy, over thirty interrelated causes pertain to emigration (many of those at work in the marital sphere also stimulate emigration). Once again, I will address only the principal causes and stress the role of sexual repression, dealing first with internal factors and then external ones promoting emigration.

Among internal causes, the previously considered inheritance pattern, parents who want to maintain the family status quo for various reasons, and the girls' and young women's increasing dissatisfaction with their lot figure as prominently in the emigration picture as the marital. Some Inis Beag men claim that the reason male youths are leaving the island is economic depression, caused by the collapse of kelp-making and the fishing industry. But this cause is untenable when one examines the increase in government subsidies, remittances from relatives abroad, and taxation and land rental policies; these have far more than made up for the loss of previous revenue. Real income has increased substantially, despite recent inflation, and young men are very much aware of this fact. Just as late marriage has become institutionalized over the past century, so has emigration since the first large-scale migration of islanders in 1822. Emigration is a way of life, which will stimulate some folk to leave in spite of other conditions which might lead an observer to advise their remaining.

By far the most important reason for Inis Beag's long dwindling population is the total cultural impact of sexual puritanism and the secular "excesses" of the clergy. Blanshard writes, "When all the reasons for a flight from Ireland have been mentioned, there still remains a suspicion that Irish young people are leaving their nation largely because it is a poor place in which to be happy and free. Have the priests created a civilization in which the chief values of youth and love are subordinate to Catholic discipline?" (Blanshard 1954: 154). What "remains a suspicion" to Blanshard is fully confirmed by a wealth of data from Inis